

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2959

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

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AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, OTRA, WA, SF, US

SUBJECT: NAMIBIAN CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

REFS: (A) USUN 5072 NOTAL; (B) USUN 5130 NOTAL

1. IN LIGHT OF CONFLICTING CLAIMS AND STATEMENTS MADE DURING VISIT OF NAMIBIAN GROUP REPRESENTING CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE (REFTELS), EMBASSY FEELS IT MAY BE USEFUL TO PROVIDE RUNDOWN OF FACTS AS WE KNOW THEM, ABOUT DELEGATES TO CONFERENCE, OUR ESTIMATION OF "REPRESENTATIVENESS" OF VARIOUS DELEGATIONS, AND CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN NAMIBIA.

2. NO DELEGATES ATTENDING CONFERENCE WERE ELECTED BY POPULATION GROUP THEY REPRESENT SPECIFICALLY AS DELEGATES. OF ELEVEN DELEGATIONS, MEMBERS OF FIVE (WHITE, OWAMBO, KAVANGO, BASTER AND COLORED) ARE ELECTED OFFICIALS.

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MEMBERS OF SIX REMAINING GROUPS (CAPRIVI, HERERO, NAMA,

DAMARA, TSWANA AND BUSHMEN) HOLD NO ELECTIVE OFFICE. SOME MEMBERS OF RESPECTIVE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES.

3. SOME DELEGATIONS UNDOUBTEDLY ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF MAJORITY OF THEIR PARTICULAR POPULATION GROUP. CAPRIVI, BUSHMAN AND KAVANGO DELEGATIONS ARE PROBABLY QUITE REPRESENTATIVE OF THEIR VERY TRADITIONALISTIC AND CONSERVATIVE TRIBAL GROUPS. LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND POLITICAL AWARENESS IS LOW FOR VAST MAJORITY OF THESE PEOPLE AND DECISIONS OF CHIEFS ARE ACCEPTED VIRTUALLY WITHOUT QUESTION. COLORED DELEGATION IS REPRESENTATIVE IN THAT OPPOSITION MEMBERS OF COLORED ADVISORY COUNCIL ARE MEMBERS. WHITE DELEGATION IS REPRESENTATIVE OF VAST MAJORITY OF WHITE COMMUNITY, ALTHOUGH SIZEABLE MINORITY OF GERMAN-SPEAKING ELEMENT REPORTEDLY IS UNHAPPY THAT THERE ARE NO GERMAN-SPEAKING DELEGATES. TSWANA, HERERO AND BASTER DELEGATIONS PROBABLY REFLECT MAJORITY OPINION, ALTHOUGH SIGNIFICANT MINORITY WITHIN EACH GROUP IS OPPOSED TO PARTICIPATION IN TALKS AND ARE SUPPORTIVE OF NNC-SWAPO STAND.

4. DAMARA GROUP AT TALKS CONSISTS SELF-APPOINTED DELEGATES WHO ARE MEMBERS OF RECENTLY-FORMED PRO-GOVERNMENT PARTY. ESTABLISHED DAMARA POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS WHICH APPARENTLY ENJOY WIDE SUPPORT (DAMARA TRIBAL EXECUTIVE AND DAMARALAND ADVISORY COUNCIL) REFUSED TO ATTEND TALKS UNLESS CERTAIN CONDITIONS WERE MET. NAMA DELEGATES ARE MEMBERS OF COUNCIL OF CHIEFS, WHICH WAS SHARPLY SPLIT OVER QUESTION OF ATTENDING TALKS. COURT ACTION CURRENTLY IS UNDERWAY CHALLENGING RIGHT OF PRESENT DELEGATION TO REPRESENT NAMA PEOPLE. OWAMBO DELEGATION REPRESENTS ELEMENT OF TRIBE WHOSE INFLUENCE WAS DOMINANT IN DISPUTED JANUARY 1075 ELECTION. IT IS ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF EDUCATED AND POLITICALLY AWARE OVAMBOS, WHO FORM LARGER PROPORTION OF TRIBAL POPULATION THAN IN OTHER ETHNIC HOMELANDS, DUE IN LARGE MEASURE TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE OWAMBO LUTHERAN CHURCH.

5. SWA ADMINISTRATION HAS ELIMINATED SOME PETTY APARTHEID MEASURES. DISCRIMINATORY SIGNS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY HAS MADE POSSIBLE THE DESEGREGATION OF SOME HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS.

WE KNOW OF NO OTHER CHANGES IN APARTHEID LEGISLATION WHICH ENFORCES SEPARATION OF RACES AS IN SOUTH AFRICA.
BOWDLER

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